

Barton Sabre

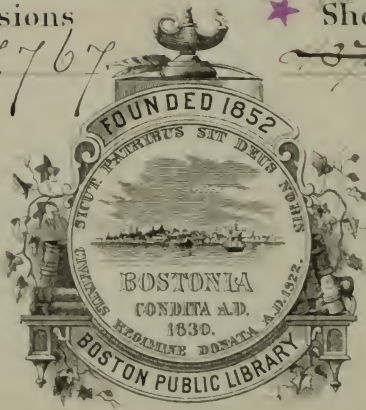
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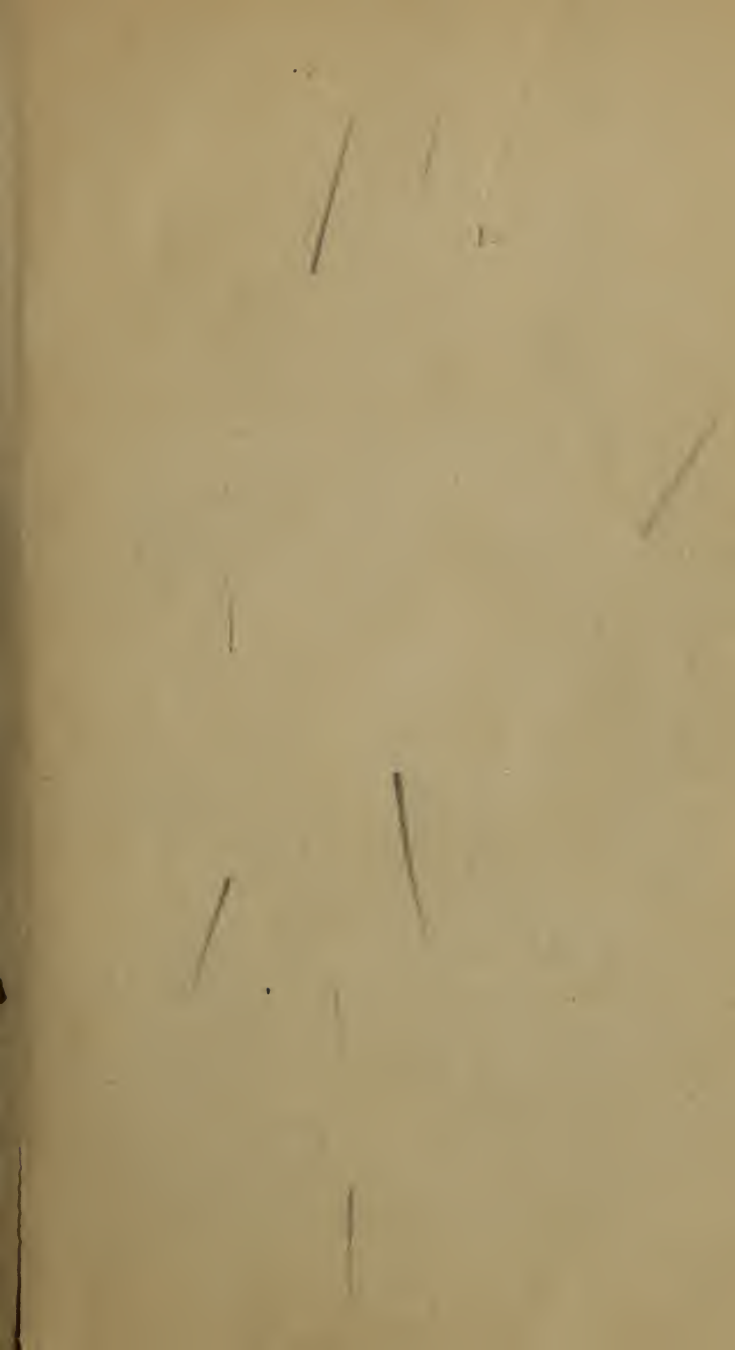


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Received Jan. 3, 1885.



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CALIFORNIA.



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LETTERS FROM JOSEPH F. CRONELLY,

TO

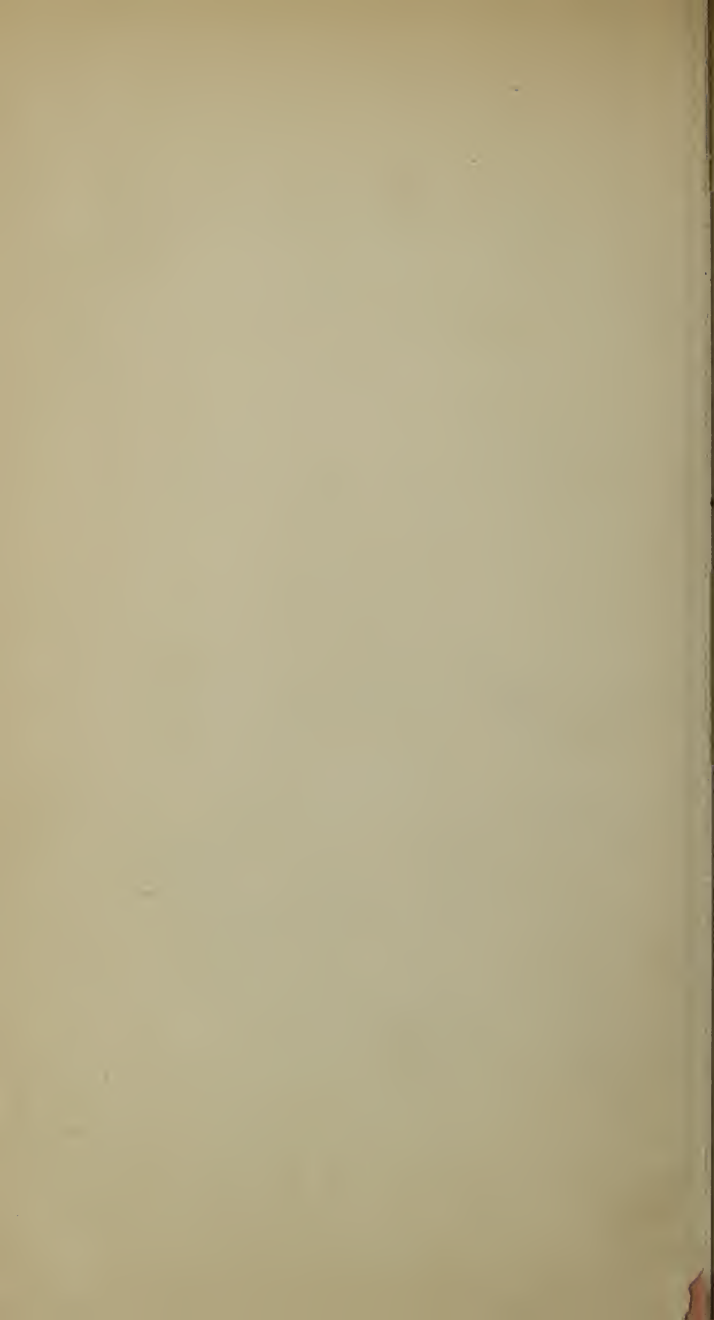
HENRY BURBIDGE, GALWAY.



NEW YORK :

ROBERT MALCOLM, PRINTER, 49 CEDAR STREET.

1869.



CALIFORNIA.

The following very admirable letter on California, was written by a Galway gentleman, a merchant of New York, who recently visited the Far West, to a friend in this city:—

San Francisco, Cali. Sept. 15th, 1868.

MY DEAR HENRY,—In my last I promised to give you as full a description as I could of this country, and of the Yosemite Valley, in case I visited it.

My visit hither is principally on business, but I have associated with it a great amount of pleasure. I arrived here on the 1st of July, and was cordially received by my friend D. J. Oliver, whose guest I am.

California is daily proving its claim to be, in the future, one of the principal producing States in the Union. The staple articles of exportation at present are, wheat, wool, and hides. Wheat is produced at the rate of thirty to seventy-five bushels to the acre, according to locality; its quality being the finest white. In many instances it is reaped, threshed, and sacked in the field by machinery; put on a wagon, carted to the nearest steam-boat or car for San Francisco, and commences its voyage for Europe or New

York; all being done on the same day, so perfectly dry and hard is it when reaped. The surplus amount for exportation this year is estimated at three hundred and sixty thousand tons, equal to one shipload of 1,000 tons a day, every day, for a year. This is a low estimate, and certainly within bounds. A scarcity of tonnage is more than likely to exist within the limited time that the grain should be shipped from here. Freight to Liverpool at present is £3 5s. per ton. All wheat is shipped in sacks of one hundred lbs. each—or supposed to contain that amount—it is bought and sold by the sack, and is spoken of in like manner. Cabbages, turnips, potatoes, parsnips, and such vegetables are to be had green or new the whole year around. Without exaggeration the finest potatoes in the world are grown here, ranging in weight from half a pound to three and a half pounds each; the quality of the finest—the old Cup kind. Fruit is large and delicious; strawberries being nearly the size of Craften apples with you, and plums as large as your ordinary apples. The apples here resemble in size good sized beets with you; and all possess a flavour and sweetness equal, if not superior, to any I ever tasted in Galway; but what shall I say of the peaches? they exceed any description I can give them. For years have I boasted of Maryland peaches and spoken favorably of those grown in New Jersey, but California beats the world in peaches, and, in fact, in fruit generally. Cheese is made here in abundance; so that California can not alone support itself now, but will have a large surplus, yearly, for exportation. Everything grows on a large scale here, even the children, and when you ascertain their age, it is with difficulty you can associate their growth with it.

The Irish people have a firm hold on the State, and some of them have grown extremely wealthy. They are found amongst the principal bankers, merchants, store-keepers, and more especially, wealthy farmers.

They own more wheat this year than the people of any other nation resident in this State, that I could find; and so long as men are able and willing to work, they are bound to succeed here.

This is the poorest place in the world for half gentlemen, unprofessional clerks, or for borrowing money on your honor as a collateral.

There are many worthy Galwaymen in the State. I could mention many whose names would be familiar; but it would be invidious to do so. One Galwayman retired this month from business; his fortune being made. Another succeeds him in the business; and the seeds sown by Brother Paul J. O'Connor in Galway, some twenty or thirty years ago, are producing a most luxuriant crop, to the great edification of many a Californian.

It afforded me unspeakable pleasure to meet many of my youthful companions, not seen for twenty years and upwards.

After a few weeks rest and attention to business I prepared to start for that world-renowned spot, the Yo Semite valley.

On a beautiful evening in August, a small party of us took the steamer in San Francisco for Stockton; a small town distant about eighty miles up the San Joaquin river. We had a good view of the country as we steamed along; the scenery being tolerably interesting. We arrived at Stockton next morning at six o'clock, and took the coach immediately for Coultersville, distant seventy miles; and as rough a road as can well be imagined; having to get out frequently to walk hills and rocky passes; the thermometer indicating one hundred and forty degrees in the sun and one hundred and three to one hundred and five degrees in the shade at all stopping places.

After fifteen hours hard riding and half fasting, we arrived at Coultersville at nine p. m., and registered our names at the

Coultersville hotel; where we received everything necessary to refresh us.

We stayed here next day to get mules and a guide.

The discovery of gold in 1849 caused this now respectable sized town, about 4,000 feet above the level of the sea, to spring into existence.

From the many creeks and mines in this vicinity there has been a great deal of gold taken; and at one time, it was looked upon as the most profitable, mining district in the State.

It is now almost forsaken; having been very nigh exhausted.

We visited one very extensive mine owned by Mr. Robert McKee, who is one of the principal gentlemen of this place. We rode to it, a distance of seven miles, and, after a good decent, were led to the entrance.

We penetrated a thousand feet into the heart of the mountain.

About three-fourths of the way, a shaft of four hundred feet is sunk; the men were working at it at the time. I picked up some rich specimens of quartz rock which I retain as mementos.

We started next morning on our mules; and as mule riding over mountains was a new occupation to me, especially with one of my legs in the stirrup overhanging a precipice of three or sometimes four thousand feet, and on the other side, the almost perpendicular continuation upwards of the mountain. Considering also that we rode on a trail about eighteen inches wide, and that a stumble on the part of the mule, might honor him with an exit from this world in the company of a Galwayman, and from such a height, I must confess my saddle was anything but a bed of roses to me. One thing alone gave me comfort and courage; a mule—be he ever so

mulish—was never, (or at least so seldom as to prove the rule,) known to make such an inglorious exit. After a twelve mile ride we arrived at "Bower Cave." This is a natural cave in the heart of a mountain, in the form of a perfect amphitheatre with a dome. On arriving at the entrance we paid the keeper fifty cents each, and were led downwards fifty-two wooden steps; these landed us on an even platform or bank, which is used as a place for refreshing the traveler. It is completely covered in, and has a large tree growing in the centre. The light is admitted through a space at the top, caused by a part of the roof or dome having fallen in at some time. From here we descended to the lake at the bottom, which is forty feet deep. We took the boat there, and sailed about for some time. We afterwards ascended to the upper portion of the Cave, by means of steps built for the purpose, and entered a few dark rooms, naturally cut through. Our lights did not illumine them sufficiently to take very minute observations; but they were well and evenly floored. From the surface of the lake to the dome is one hundred and twenty one feet, and the width one hundred and ten

After an hour's visit to this natural wonder, we started again, and our next stopping place—and for the night—was "Black's Hotel," (not of Galway tho'). This gentleman and his amiable wife are favorably known throughout the country for the excellent fare given, and the unceasing attention paid their guests.

We spent here a very happy Saturday night. There being no wagon-road to this place, every pound of goods has to be packed on mules, principally at Coulterville, and driven over the mountains; for which a charge of ten cents a pound is made, so that what is got here has to be paid for.

Considering this difficulty, you will be surprised at the fact that here I drank the best glass of Irish whiskey punch—

Bush Mills, 12 years old—I ever tasted. One of our party, said it was also his case; and, considering the amount of money he has made in distilling he ought to be a judge. Next morning being Sunday, we were early in the saddle, having a good day's ride before us to reach the valley.

Mountain after mountain had to be encountered, sometimes up an almost impassable steep, that the mules could scarcely crawl up, and again down a steep, so precipitous, that I had to ride flat on my back, my poll almost touching the mule's tail. At twelve o'clock we arrived at a place called "Crane Flat," a grand relief to me; and would be to any person going through the same morning's work. On this place there was a solitary house or hut; and, of course, an Irishman or woman had to be around somewhere. The hut belonged to a Yankee named Gobin, who was married to an Irish girl named Quigley. They and their assistants were minding eight thousand sheep, their own property. By a little kind persuasion we induced Mrs. Gobin to cook dinner for us, which she did in good style, and we enjoyed a hearty meal about seven thousand feet above the sea. I proposed to change the name of the place from "Crane Flat" to "Grand Relief," which the owner immediately adopted, and, in due form, it was regularly christened "Grand Relief" by J. F. C., of New York.

I printed it with charcoal on shingles and nailed it up at different points. I had it properly painted on signs and sent out afterwards from Coulterville.

The balance of the trip to the point of descent to the valley was a repetition of the morning's ride—ups and downs. At this point our guide ordered us off, in order to girt up the saddles for the descent. We then stood nine thousand feet above the sea level and looked down almost perpendicularly

on the valley beneath us five thousand feet. The spectacle was most gorgeous. Now commenced the task of the day. We had two and a half miles of a descent to make, and at such angles, so steep, and coming so suddenly on what might be termed the jumping off point, that I, with others, thought it prudent to get off my mule and politely invited him to jump down after, but not on top of me, while I tried to lead him by the halter. Many an anxious look I took up at him after my jump—fearing he might come down on top of me—so that I might stand from under if I saw him coming.

I thought I achieved a great deal when I luncheoned on the top of "Croagh Patrick," and when I attained the summit of the "Catskill" Mountains, but it was as children's play to men's hard work.—Tired, worn out and breathless, we at length arrived at the foot of the mountain, our guide brought us a tin of the pure water running at our feet, and formally introduced us to the Yo-So-Mi-Te Valley.—This valley is about one hundred and fifty miles south east of San Francisco, and is seven miles long by from one-half to one mile in width. There is about fifty feet fall throughout its length, and it is four thousand and sixty feet above the level of the sea.

The main Merced river, seventy feet wide runs through it. Its granite walls are nearly vertical, having a polished surface. It has the appearance of a stupendous racket court, and many of your Galway players would, at first sight, undertake to give a doubler in it, so narrow does it appear from the height of its walls which are the following dimensions:

Indian Name,	Signification,	American Name,	Height above Valley.
To-coy-a,	shade to Indian Balyybasket,	North Dome....	3,725 feet.
Tis-sa-ack,	Goddess of the Valley,	South Dome..	6,000 "
		Cloud's Vest.....	6,450 "
Wah-ta,	Martyr Mountain,	Cap of Liberty.....	4,600 "
See-Wah-lam,	Mountain Star King.....		5,000 "
Law-oo-too,	Bearshin Mountain,	Glacier Rock.....	3,700 "
Great Chief of the Valley,	The Captain.....		3,300 "
Wah-wah-le-na,	Three Graces.....		3,750 "
Pom-pom-pasus,	Mountains playing leapfrog,	Three Brothers.....	4,200 "
Poo-see-nah,	Clurck-ka, Large Acorn Cache,	Cathedral Rock.....	2,400 "
		Sentinel Dome.....	4,000 "
Loza,	Sentinel Rock.....		3,270 "

These are stretched along on both sides like two solid walls, differing only in height, as shown.

Numerous kinds of deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs are in abundance, the former some three or four hundred feet in height, but they appear as diminutive as brushwood alongside the mountains.

Ferns, flowers, and grasses, grow in almost endless variety.

The water of the Merced River is very limpid and pure, and it contains plenty of trout.

After a four mile ride we arrived at "Hutchings'" Hotel, and, being much fatigued, it did not require much coaxing after supper, to make us look affectionately on our pillows. We spent our next day roaming about, and occasionally fishing in "Mirror" Lake, where we caught many trout of an ordinary size. The Lake was so clear you could distinctly count the fish at a fair distance, see them gambol, come up to the bait, fly off again, or be caught, as the case might be. The tops, and indeed the full face of the mountain walls were beautifully reflected, and, by a single glance at the water, you would say it was "yourself and nobody else" that was

at the bottom. Feeling tired of fishing, and the aspect of the water being sorely tempting—remember the range of the Thermometer—I stepped behind a tree, and before my companions, who were on the opposite bank, were aware of it, I jumped into a depth of ten feet. After a few strokes I made for the land, as the water was ice cold; but, independent of that, the idea then struck me that some Nymph from some subterranean cavern (the place was romantic enough for anything,) might come up and make love to me, and possibly invite me on a tour through the North Western Passage, refusing all denials however strongly made. The idea was quite enough, and the manner in which I made strokes for that bank—just then in imagination five miles off, although in reality only about twenty yards distant—would have been a caution to young beginners in the art of swimming, if any were there to see them.

We spent the balance of the evening in Mr. Lemon's garden picking strawberries, raspberries, and all kinds of delicious fruits. Our next day was laid out for the grand feat, to visit the "Vernal" and "Nevada" Falls.

WE started after breakfast, and rode as far as possible; mules here will go almost anywhere; fastened our animals to trees, and prepared for the ascent by donning oil skin coat, and turning up pants, &c. Our guide and his assistants brought the luncheon and cigars. The distance from this spot to the foot of "Vernal" Falls is two miles, which had to be made through very rough passages—jumping from rock to rock, climbing by hands and knees, and as best one could—resting frequently. About midway is located "Register" Rock, having a smooth face of about fifteen feet

square. On this you can read all sorts of names, hailing from all sorts of places, in all sorts of writing—poetry and puns in keeping. Of course, wishing to live in mural history, we also registered our names.

I hailed from Galway, (New York being overdone there,) and only hope the visitors who may read it years hence will know, by the fame the old town will then have acquired, where it is, and what manner of a place it has become. Again we start, and, after a vigorous push upwards, we came to a stand still at the face of a narrow passage that we had to cross. It was about fifteen inches wide and twenty yards long, wet and sloppy. On one side was the butt-end of a tree, against which I rested panting, and almost breathless, for some time. Many an uneasy side-glance I gave at the passage (like a plank) over which I had to go; whilst our guide danced to and fro, as if he were going through the "Lancers," and expected us to change places with him to the time of his music. One of the party at this critical point and moment, suggested "brandy and water," another declared "it was an angel spoke." We drank the brandy, and rested for the effect thereof. This crossing is a narrow passage on the smooth side of one of the mountains, having on one side an almost perpendicular wall, and on the other a precipice, or rather a continuation of the said wall to the bottom, where the waters of the fall roared and dashed wildly: not even a blade of grass to hold on by in crossing. It was truly "walking the plank." However, it being, as it were, our Rubicon, we crossed it.

In a few moments we came in full view of the "Vernal" Fall, three hundred and fifty feet high. The sight was grand, indeed; the spray being very thick, and the rainbow—the most beautiful and brilliant I ever beheld—it being the first time I ever saw a rainbow in the form of a complete and per-

fect circle. I stood six feet within the circumference of this phenomenon, it lying, as it were, round me like an enormous hoop, each portion of which possessed the same beautiful tints and proportions. So perfect was the illusion that, having asked one of my companions to feel it, he, without hesitation, laid his hand on the vapor. We now proceeded a short distance, being almost blinded by the spray, to the foot of the ladder, which is placed on one side of the Fall, and is almost perpendicular. It is built of wood, and is strongly supported: it has about one hundred steps in all, and is the only means by which the upper or "Nevada" falls can be reached. When we reached the top of the ladder we stepped on to a beautiful granite floor, and, were I to live a thousand years, I should never forget the feeling of majestic awe that took possession of me at sight of it. It would be folly in me to attempt a description in language of the grandeur and beauty of the scene.

What feelings and aspirations the heavenly aspect of all around give rise to in the human breast! The spontaneous outburst of adoration to the Creator as it forces itself through every word one utters; without a consciousness of the adoration paying. To my mind the painter, Martin, must have seen the spot when he painted his "Plains of Heaven"; it is so mystical and still so real.

After a few moments given to the contemplation of this wonderful scene I stepped to the brink of the fall at which point nature has placed a solid granite barrier four feet high and two feet thick. By this we could stand, or sit with ease and safety, and look at the fall we admired a few moments before we ascended the ladder, as it fell to the rocks below. I went to the brink and held out my boot to let the water touch it; so gentle was the stream though thousands of tons of water went over it every minute. To my mind the sun

shone more brilliantly than I ever saw it before. The air soft, refreshing and balmy, filled with the sweet fragrance of the most beautiful wild flowers, and every breath, as it played on my cheek, seemed to chide me for staying so long below in a world of strife neglecting a spot like this—a place of peace and sanctity.

Evergreen trees, wild flowers, ferns and shrubs were in great variety and abundance; and the innocent playfulness of the water as it gently rolled along to destruction's point, made it appear like a grand fairy scene. It would be difficult to tell which of the three elements contributed most to the beauty and splendor of the place—air, earth, or water; the first being singularly mild considering the elevation—6,600 feet above the sea.

We proceeded through the vale along the margin of the rushing waters to the foot of the "Nevada" falls, a distance of half a mile. The fall being comparatively light at this season of the year (August) we were favored by getting a better view of nature's construction for its reception, and could also see the effect its constant dropping had on the rocks at the base. The face of the rock is smoother than the Galway dock entrance and is one solid rock, slightly convex. It is very high vertical. The fall is seven hundred feet, and as all the descriptive language I am possessed of has been already used, and indeed exhausted, so that I fear you would tire of its repetition I must leave you to imagine the best portion of its great beauty.

We placed our backs against it after a time and leaned comfortably with our heads touching at a slightly inclined plane. The water fell some distance from us, the spray from it scarcely reaching where we stood: as it touched the rock it gave a wild roar and with a bound rushed madly along from rock to rock; the latter tremendous in size and weight,

as if placed there for the occasion. From these it rushed to a curve, and through a narrow pass, over which there is a temporary bridge. At this point it was majestically wild. We stood on the bridge and threw over some heavy logs of wood, which were immediately lost to sight, but appeared afterwards at a distance, when they had gone through their fantastic evolutions, and at a point where the water is stopped in its rush, and received on a beautiful broad granite table, where it forms itself into independent little worlds of a globular form, and looks like shot while being sorted in a shot tower.

If your hat came over the falls you could recover it at this point, so gentle and quiet the water rolls; each drop looks a diamond that had just left the lapidary's hands, cut, polished, and put in shape. From this point it rolled quietly along to the edge of the "Vernal" fall, where it had to go through almost the same process.

This being as high as any tourist can go, and feeling we had "done the falls," we sat on the white granite rocks and took a hearty lunch, having the purest of water, &c.,—especially the &c. After picking a few flowers and ferns, for our friends, we bade farewell to the falls, and made our way back to the Hotel in about the same manner as we came.

On our return we found some gentlemen had arrived at the hotel; some from China and some from nearer home. One gentleman came from Japan; and there was a Dublin doctor, who had spent twelve years in the East Indies.

We spent several hours in conversation; the Yo-Se-Mi-Te (or great Grizzly Bear) Falls, 2,332 feet high, dropping in front of us on the other side of the valley; the moon shining on the mountain walls and through the trees made a beautiful but still and solemn scene. Further down the valley is the Fall called Po-Ho-No, or "Spirit of the Evil Wind," or

“Bridal Veil,” nine hundred and forty feet; another is the tall and slender fall, or “Ribbon Fall,” three thousand three hundred feet; and the South Cannon Fall, six hundred feet. The “Vernal” fall is also known as the “Cataract of Diamonds,” this being the meaning of the name “Pi-wy-ack,” given it by the Indians.

In 1849, the valley was first discovered by the whites. The many depredations committed on the early settlers by the Indians in this neighborhood, in the shape of stealing cattle, horses, and sheep, startled the former, and they determined to put a stop to them. Forming a body, they tracked the Indians clear into the valley, where a battle was then fought. Several Indians were killed and wounded—one white man only being killed, whose remains are interred in the valley. From time this forth it became a place of great interest; some parties settled there, and there are now three claimants for the different portions of it by the Sovereign right of Squaterenity. Mr. Hutchinson has worked hard to obtain a grant of it from the U. S. Government, and should he succeed, I hesitate not to say it will be a grievous wrong doing on the part of the Government, an everlasting disgrace to California, and a hereditary evil to Mariposa country, and its surroundings. The claimants should be remunerated liberally for their improvements, and their rights justly considered; but the valley belongs to the whole people, and should never be parted with, or given away to any individual or company. An outlay of two hundred thousand dollars on the part of the government would make a wagon-road from Coulterville or Mariposa to the valley: also a road to drive round it, and make a good trail up to the “Vernal” Falls. By building a respectable hotel, and giving a ten year’s lease to a respectable party, with the promise of keeping the place in the best order, &c., a toll could be very properly charged

for the road, and one for the valley, which would be most readily responded to by the tourists, who would then (and will in any case) be arriving from all parts of the world, as soon as the Pacific Railroad is finished, to visit the greatest natural wonder in the world.

Having descended from the Coulterville side we concluded to take our exit on the Mariposa side; so feeling satisfied we had done the "Valley," "Falls," "Fishes," and all, after a hearty breakfast and a drink of the cool pure water, on a morning deservedly in keeping with the place, our guide passed the word to "boot and saddle." Here I must remark that the tourist who has the good fortune to secure the services of Mr. Smith, of Coulterville, as we did, may congratulate himself on getting as good a guide as man can be; he is thoughtful, never forgets anything, and anticipates your every wish.

After a five mile ride from the hotel we began gradually to ascend, and in a short time I found it was ascending with a *stern* reality. We had to rest the mules at every level spot gained, until, at length, after several hours ride we found ourselves at "Inspiration" Point, high up out of the valley. At this point we got the best view of the gorgeous structure—it looked as if reared by giant hands. We could look up the whole length of it; looking down on the running silvery stream, five thousand feet beneath us, whilst we were nearly double that distance above the sea.

Having taken a long, last lingering look we bid farewell to the "Yosemite Valley."

My next object of interest was a view of the "Big Trees." I had spent several days riding through the thickest of forests, where I could see nothing but trees, grass, and a little sky. Several of the first named were large, and looking at them gradually prepared me for the sight of what are called *par ex-*

cellence the "Big Trees." One large fellow lay on the ground and was burned right through—endways—I presume by the Indians to live in. Our party rode through it on mule back several feet above our hats being vacant space. Many of the large trees are burned a good way into the centre by the Indians so as to afford them shelter, the tree still standing and alive. I measured several of them close to the ground, some were one hundred and ten, one hundred and fifteen, and one or two, one hundred and twenty feet in circumference. I still retain the twine I measured with. One large fellow was blown down—query when—perhaps before the flood, it is called the Giant; with difficulty I climbed on to it. It was so wide that I could with ease, notwithstanding its oval form, drive a horse and wagon on its whole length which appeared to me an eighth of a mile in extent.

We spent the best portion of a day here, and partook of a hearty lunch washed down with the coolest spring water I ever tasted.

I trust you will now think I have redeemed my promise to give you as full an account as I could of this country, and all I saw in my trip hither. You must allow for its shortcomings by recollecting how difficult it was to make notes whilst in such a state of locomotion as the trip involves, and take the will for the deed. When next we have a talk together, which I hope may be soon, I shall supplement any deficiencies in my description.

How I wish you had been with me. I also wish we had the company of some more of our Galway friends with whom I had a pleasant excursion of six days duration to the Isles of Arran, and although my trip to the Yosemite Valley was richer in the picturesque and wonderful works of the All-powerful it was not a bit more so in pleasurable conviviality.

I am, my dear Henry, yours, &c.,

J. F. CRONELLY.

To HENRY BURBIDGE, Esq., *Galway*.

